



Shared Spaces Research & Consulting
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The 7 Pillars of IT-Enabled Team Productivity: What Teams Need from IT Systems to Be Productive

Overview. **7 Ideal Capabilities**

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Overview of the 7 Pillars

Most of the office productivity software in use today is focused on improving the productivity of the individual. However, this is out-of-step with team- and group-based approaches to delivering on shared project outcomes. Overall productivity takes a hit when teams are forced to use software applications that do not facilitate shared team activities. As an organization changes to embrace the project team as an organizing construct—specifically those with representation both from multiple internal functional areas and external experts—what are the key IT capabilities for enabling team productivity?

7 Key Pillars

Without talking about vendors and products, in an ideal world, teams need the following capabilities:

1. *Shared Access to Team Data.* A secured place is provided for storing data, documents, discussion threads, and other interesting things. Each person on the team can access the shared data, add new data or documents, and edit or revise existing data or documents depending on their level of access to the shared area.
2. *Location-Independent Access to Team Data, People and Applications.* Team members can read and write documents associated with the project from multiple locations; they are not tied to their desktop computer at their desk in the office. Access may be given through a wireless connection on a laptop, a secured web page through an Internet café, or via synchronization capabilities for disconnected usage.
3. *Real-Time Joint Editing and Review.* During the course of writing a new document or reviewing an existing one, team members often want input from others on the team. This ranges from the formal (“what do you think about the way I’ve written this line?”) to the informal (“can we brainstorm on a response to this posting?”). Team members need a quick method of inviting someone else to view the same information on their screen, to jointly navigate through a document, and to permit the other person to directly change the text they’ve been writing.
4. *Coordinate Schedules with Team Aware Scheduling Software.* Teams need recourse to a calendaring and scheduling system that automatically balances personal appointments, enterprise-wide meetings, and project team events. Today’s electronic calendaring and scheduling systems enable people within the same enterprise to set up meetings with a minimum of fuss and process wastage. However, these systems do not work well between organizations, eg, using a free or busy search to find the next available meeting time for all participants doesn’t work across multiple calendaring systems. Neither do they work well within collaborative workspaces, as each individual team member has to manually cross-reference their electronic diary with a team meeting proposed in the calendar in the collaborative workspace.
5. *Build Social Engagement through Presence, Blogs and IM.* Systems that display the presence of others, systems that enable others to keep a running commentary on things that they are thinking about or reading, and systems that enable real-

- time discussions go some way toward re-constructing the spontaneous opportunities afforded by in-person work. People working together in the same office have many spontaneous opportunities during the day to engage at a personal level—chance hallway meetings, coffee break catchups, and water cooler discussions. These personal engagements provide insight into the true character of others on the team, and they either build or diminish trust ... with inter-personal trust being a critical factor for team productivity.
6. *Enterprise Action Management.* Teams need a way of tracking outstanding action points that gives shared visibility regarding who is doing what, and explicitly links next actions to team goals and enterprise mandates. Emails, meetings, threaded discussions and videoconferences give rise to tasks that team members have to do. There is a disconnect in today's systems, however, between the tracking and management of outstanding next actions at the enterprise, group, and individual levels. Individuals create their own next actions based on team goals, but have no simple way of associating their next actions with the mandates of the team. Put in reverse, the team manager or project leader cannot see a consolidated list of the next actions that individuals are working on in the context of the team's goals and priorities. Tasks and next actions are stored in different applications that do not communicate with each other.
 7. *Broaden the Network through Automatic Discovery Services.* Teams need to be informed about other internal or external people who have expertise in the specific project matter under consideration. Internal automatic discovery services constantly scan the minute-by-minute chatter of the organization—the emails and IMs, the documents being written, the web pages being read—to build a sense of who knows what, and to create bridges for communication between distinct experts. External automatic discovery services are less mature, but enable people to track certain keywords or phrases of interest.

What's Next?

I will be expanding on these 7 ideas over the next couple of weeks. My intention is to build a frame of reference through which IT-enabled team productivity can be explored. In addition I will highlight features of today's team-oriented products and services that do or do not deliver on these required capabilities. I welcome your feedback on this topic, either by email or a comment.

About Michael Sampson

Michael Sampson has been an active researcher, analyst and consultant in the messaging and collaboration market since 1994, working with an international client base in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, his country of residence. Michael is passionate about helping businesses and government agencies leverage the power of collaborative technologies in the context of their day-to-day work processes for business success and outstanding government results.

Michael established Shared Spaces Research & Consulting to work closely with interesting businesses and government agencies working to develop an all-encompassing collaboration infrastructure by leveraging the power of shared spaces to overcome the limitations of today's inadequate individual communication technologies.

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About Shared Spaces Research & Consulting Ltd

Shared Spaces Research & Consulting fulfils two complementary objectives in the market: to publish thoughtful self-funded vendor-neutral independent research on how businesses and government agencies can leverage the power of shared spaces for enterprise collaboration, and to provide consulting services on shared spaces. Key technologies explored through research include:

- Collaborative Team Workspaces
- Real-Time Interaction Technologies
- Collaborative Business Portals
- Presence & Availability in Business Applications
- Wireless Collaboration & Messaging
- Collaboration Auto-Discovery.

Shared Spaces offers consulting services that help clients cultivate marketplace advantage:

- For Organizations
 - Collaboration Infrastructure Strategy and Architecture
 - Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Collaboration Infrastructure
- For Vendors of Collaboration Products
 - Product Strategy Input and Review
 - Ongoing Competitive Intelligence Briefings
 - Snapshot Competitive Intelligence Projects
- For VARs of Collaboration Products
 - Building a Business Case to Justify Investment in a Collaboration Environment
 - How to Understand the Collaboration Marketplace

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